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# The Hermannsburg Mission.

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The story of the conception of this mission, the years of wonderful preparation and its final accomplishment, reads like a fairy tale; or perhaps better still, like one of our Lord's miracles. It tells how a man prayed and the people became interested. He and they continued to pray, and interest became enthusiasm and the people offered themselves and their means to help carry out their pastor's plans for a mission in Africa.

The Hermannsburg Mission had its beginning literally in the soul of Louis Harms. The grace of God in his heart was the impulse which gave it power and carried it on to its great results. To understand the character of the work, it is necessary to know something of the life of the man.

Louis Harms, the son of a Lutheran pastor and the founder of the Hermannsburg Mission, was born in Walsrode, Germany, in 1808. Even

as a child, he showed aptitude as a scholar. At the age of eighteen, he entered the University of Gottingen, where he remained three years. The most unblushing unbelief prevailed here at this time and its effect on young Harms was to make him search for the truth. He traversed the whole circle of the sciences, but found no peace and came to the point when he said, "There is no God." But one night when studying Christ's intercessory prayer, God revealed himself to the struggling youth and henceforth he was one of his chosen vessels. Until 1843, he was employed as tutor in two different families, and even then was a witness for Christ, for we read that his sermons and Bible classes were much blessed. Two calls reached him during this period, one from the mission house at Hamburg where his services were desired as tutor, and the other from New York, where he was invited to serve as preacher. Both calls were declined, as he believed, in deference to the Divine will he was designed for Hermannsburg, and kept waiting for it till the hour came.

In 1843, he went to Hermannsburg to assist his father in his parish, and at his father's death in 1849, he became sole pastor there. Very soon the zeal and earnestness and spirituality of the new pastor began to yield rich returns. The attendance at church increased; reverence for the Bible grew; there was more conversation on

sacred things. And now the heart of the pastor began to warm toward the millions in heathendom, especially in Africa, and he often made it the subject of his Sabbath discourse and very often the subject of conversation in his visits among his people. They soon caught his spirit and began to talk of the work among themselves, and then some began to give. Their first contributions were a silver penny from a child, six pence from a poor laborer, and six shillings from a widow. This enthusiastic pastor then urged his people to give themselves, personally and practically, to the work, and in response, twelve came forward and offered to go, one of whom gave his farm as well as himself. With the income from this, a training school was opened for these twelve with a course of instruction extending over four years--both scholastic and industrial.

The shaping of the mission may be said to have been taken out of Harm's hands just now. He had not planned a mission of *colonization*, but it was thus the Hermannsburg Mission took form under God, and the circumstances which developed it are as follows: After a year or two had passed in the preparation of the twelve, a number of German sailors, recently converted, sought admission to the training school. Their suggestion was to found a colony near Boney, in Western Africa, and under the superintendence of Christian missionaries, seek to sup-

press the slave trade. This resulted in peasants, who had no missionary gifts, asking to be sent as settlers, and some of the villagers as tradesmen or mechanics. Of the sixty who thus offered, eight were chosen. Of the sailors mentioned, only two endured the tedium and strain of study.

Just here the pastor himself was greatly encouraged and at the suggestion of the sailors, conceived the idea of building their own ship for mission purposes. In course of time, by faith, work and prayer, the ship Candace was built and paid for and dedicated to the bearing of the Gospel to the South Africans. A service was held on board October 28th, 1853, at Hamburg before sailing for Mombas and the Galla country, via the Cape and Port Natal. To each class,—sailors, colonists, officers, missionaries,—Pastor Harms had something separate to say, but to all he laid special emphasis on the *necessity of prayer*. “Begin all your work with prayer; when the storm rises, pray; when the billows rage round the ship, pray; when sin comes, pray; and when the devil tempts you, pray. So long as you pray it will go well with you body and soul.”

On reaching their destination their faith and zeal were put to the first and severest test. The Mohammedan powers at Mombas, jealous of all foreign influence and especially opposed to the incoming of Christian missionaries, compelled

the Hermannsburgers to depart. The Candace then put back to Natal, where she had stopped a few months before, and received a glad reception from some of their own countrymen, from missionaries of other lands, and by the government of the colony. Without renouncing the hope of yet reaching the Gallas, on which their hearts were deeply set, they settled down to work where they were. On the 19th of September, 1854, with five ox-teams, they reached the seat of their first and central station, which they called by the dear home-land name of "Hermannsburg, on a large farm of six thousand acres, called Perseverance," situated on a branch of the Umvoti. Their purpose was to strike out, as opportunity offered, in different directions, especially into Zululand, even to the Gallas. They had already entered on their work by making tours of observation and by studying the language with other missionaries, and aiding them as best they could.

Their next work was to build a house in which to live and a place in which to worship. To this they devoted themselves at once and yet kept up their study of the language and lost no opportunity to teach the people whatever would be helpful to them, both in this life and the next. The carpenter with the best workers in wood went to the "bush" for timber. The smith made ready a smithy for work in iron. The farmer gathered a native force to care for the



teams and help him in husbandry. The mason with a few good helpers began to make brick. The thatcher worked in the garden until he was wanted on the roof. The cook, as yet without a kitchen, had a laborious business to feed so many hungry people. They planned to build a house, 120 feet by 40 feet, with eight dwelling rooms and twelve bed rooms, a large dining and sitting room, a large kitchen and a long hall running through the centre. They took their meals at one table in the common dining room. Here, too, they met, morning and evening for family worship. Later, as the number increased by new arrivals from the training school, they built a similar house a half a mile away.

Before three months had passed, four natives, a married couple and two others, who had been under instruction, came to their teachers with the desire to be baptized. After some weeks of further instruction, they were examined before the congregation, accepted, baptized, and made the nucleus of a church among the Zulus.

Meantime the frequent reports sent to friends and pastor in the homeland, kept the missionary zeal at high tide. The training school was kept full, usually with about fifty. In 1856, a second company, chiefly farmers and maids, was found ready to go out; in 1857, still another company of forty-six, of whom twelve were missionaries, was sent out; and again in 1860, twenty-four set

sail, of whom four were missionaries, the rest colonists. All this led to the frequent founding of new stations, so that in six years from the beginning of their work at Hermannsburg, they had ten stations, four in Natal, three in Zululand and three among the Bechuana, and had baptized fifty heathen. At the end of the first decade, in 1864, they had founded twenty-four stations and started two more and baptized 190 converts. How well founded, planned and managed was Pastor Harms' mission enterprise is seen in the fact that it lived and prospered marvelously after his death, which occurred November 14th, 1866.

At the Christmas festival, held in 1870, when the pastor and people were accustomed to review their year's mission work, the report showed thirty-seven stations in Africa, also five in India and one in Australia. Two brethren were about to leave for California to work among the Chinese of that State. The South African stations continued to increase until they numbered fifty, when twelve or fifteen of them were swept away by war, some afterwards being rebuilt. From a report of 1891 we learn that there were at that time fifty-nine stations and fifty-nine missionaries. The baptisms for the year numbered 2,380, and the membership was 18,284. The entire amount subscribed for the mission that year was about \$62,500.

In 1897, the income was \$80,325. The expenses were heavy on account of the famine, the rinderpest and the plague in South Africa.

At the head of the mission at this time (1899) is Pastor Egmont Harms, a nephew of the founder, with an assistant, Rev. G. Oepke. They adhere to their early principle not to collect or to gather funds through organized societies. The purity of Lutheran doctrine is emphasized more than in any other mission.

The Hermannsburg Mission is a transcription of the Saviour's charge, "Have faith in God." It is studded all over with answers to prayer and glorious exploits of faith. Pastor Harms was a man of faith. He made his work whether at home or abroad, a work of faith. He had faith in God and faith in his people. He was a man of prayer. Of God he asked—in faith—the help he needed from God; of his people he asked—in faith—the help he needed from them.

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2 CENTS A PIECE.

1899.

15 CENTS A DOZEN.